War Diary IV - CASEVAC

⅄ ROXY ⅄
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> *"Blood like rain come down*
>
> *Drum on grave and ground*
>
> *Part vampire, part warrior*
>
> *Carnivore and voyeur*
>
> *Stare at the transmittal*
>
> *Sing to the death rattle"*
>
> -*Vicarious* by Tool

The weather is shit, some of the most hostile to existence I've seen. At the start of our last mission, the snow was thin but black ice covered every where. It was nigh impossible to walk to the driveway without eating shit. Given the slight angle, it was difficult to even get up the driveway when you slide back faster than you can step. This is in a regular yard in normal clothes, you can guess how that translates to running around with 45kg of gear trying to dodge drones. Every week or so, it edges above zero & everything melts. This means every step goes a foot into the mud. You can't even go prone because you'll sink too deep to even aim your rifle. Vehicles ain't doing much better. I can see what the Wehrmacht were bitching about.

Regardless, infil went great. A couple drones scouting around but none saw us, or cared anyway. When our vic showed up to the staging area, I had a brief conversation with my CO & ended up asking if they were getting hit with Grads or regular howitzers. He said it was just the guns & that he'd "only seen Grads 4 or 5 times in the whole war." Within a kilometer we passed an unexploded Grad rocket sticking out of the road.

We weren't in any real shit, we were in a couple of reserve positions about 500m away from the actual zero line. A local TDF unit was holding the line, we were there to support them when they inevitably get their teeth kicked in by any competent unit. Pretty boring mission set but it befits our rapid response role.

Our drone company decided to drop both positions' resupply drops at our bunker, so a couple of guys at the other had to run over & retrieve their share. It was barely a 100m gap, but it was fully in the open through a literal fucking graveyard. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to us, the TDF conscripts also used our tree line as a resupply route which clued in the Russian drones. A waiter, the drones that land & ambush passing troops, was parked nearby. You can't even probably guess what happened next.

One guy ("S") got completely immobilized, both legs fucked. The other ("C") made it off a bit better, filled with shrapnel & a nasty TBI. Explosion took out the radio so C crawled towards our position to scream for a medic. Both of our medics threw their boots on & sprinted outside. No rifle, no armor, not even socks. C told them to get to S, I cam out with my rifle & helped drag C into the bunker before pulling air defense. We didn't know it was a waiter, all either of them could cough up was "FPV" & there's always more than one. I covered the medics as they dragged S to the bunker as well.

I feel inclined that "medic," in Ukrainian military parlance, means a 14 day CMC course. Not the 2 year pipeline a corpsman would get. Both of our medics are young guys without prior experience, medical or military. I say this because I was highly impressed with their courage & professionalism though out this incident. C was fairly easy to treat, just some pressure bandages & pain killers. S was more complicated. He had applied tourniquets on both legs, neither of which were effective so he got an extra tourniquet on both legs. In an effort to save his legs from amputation, they converted both wounds to pressure dressings.

Usually, medical evacuation from the zero line is something measured in days & weeks in Ukraine. The "Golden Hour" of the GWOT era is fondly remembered myth. Somehow, we got extremely lucky & managed to secure an evacuation window within about 3 hours. Originally, the plan was for myself & a medic to drag S on a skid the 800ish meters to the closest available evac site. One to drag him, one to bait the drones. Orders came through to evacuate them both, so this turned into a 5 person affair, plus two casualties. I took point to scout for any more waiters & be drone bait, another drone bait in the rear. 2 guys took turns pulling the skid while another helped C limp to evac. C is an FFL vet, one of a rare breed that can limp on a shattered ankle & bare feet through a frozen forest for almost a kilometer.

Somewhere on YouTube, there's an interview with Uno who used to be our Alpha Co. commander. He made a big deal about how Azov will pull everything the brigade has to offer to get a casualty out. I didn't fully believe this but it's cool. Turms out it's true. Our artillery battalion absolutely dumped rounds on every Russian drone position within range of us. I think I heard at least 250 howitzer impacts from across the zero line. Our entire drone company also started scanning the roads & skies, as well as sending out drone killers. Drone killers are just drones with fish hooks dangling underneath, it destroys the rotors. Not great for FPVs but does great against Mavics & droppers which are far worse. 2 Ukies from the brigade medical team came out on damn four-wheeler to exfil the casualties, the driver threw out a Roman salute & yelled "Slava Ukraini" as he peeled off. That dude was sick.

As soon as we begun our movement, an arty round landed within 200m directly in our treeline. In retrospect, I'm almost positive this was friendly round. It came from the north, towards friendlies, & was audibly tumbling when it impacted. Rounds don't tumble unless you push the gun to its absolute limits over 20 miles. This means it was probably a short round from our guys. I'm not beating the autism allegations here. Would be cosmically hilarious if that took us out.

Once the casualties were gone, my main concern was the guy left behind at their position. He's a close friend with no prior experience, so I know he was up the fucking wall by himself in there only hearing the radio transmissions. We also only had one guy left in our position. We moved back before the sun set. We took cover in a nearby bunker while the drone niggers ran route clearance, which took way longer than necessary. While waiting, an arty round landed directly at the exfil sit, about 100m from us. After this very important & thorough route clearance, we pushed back to our position.

Within 50m, I saw another waiter right at the edge of the treeline. It was angled in the direction we were moving, meaning it was waiting for the CASEVAC team but just missed us. Me & my buddy were too close to detonate it, so I shot out the battery & one of the propeller arms. This mountain of close calls will continue to grow.

It was a rough night, everyone was second guessing their actions & behavior. It was unwarranted, everyone performed exceptionally well in my opinion, but this sort of psychological self harm is inevitable. Having virtually no food or water the whole time doesn't help with that. The morning was rougher. We sent 2 guys to replace our casualties in the other position. I woke up to them sprinting into our position with absolutely nothing but their rifles & the clothes on their back. One of them didn't even get socks on. Fun fact, because they don't need a radio connection, fiber optic FPVs can fly directly into a bunker. A skilled pilot can navigate through an entire underground trench system until they find a target. This is why most positions have multiple layers of nets & blankets blocking the door. Two of these FPVs tried getting through the door of the other position & almost brought the whole bunker down on top of them. The ditched everything & sprinted across to our position before a third came to finish the job.

They left their kit, packs, radios, operational phones, etc. They were very insistent that they would not go back under any circumstances. They were pretty schitzed out, so I didn't have the heart to break it to them that there was a zero percent chance that we exfil without that gear. Spoiler alert, we ran back & recovered the gear next time it rained. I went with them for moral support.

A few other things happened afterwards. After all their artillerymen & drone operators got the weight of the world dropped on their necks, they figured out that someone more dangerous than the TDF conscripts were in town. Arty, Grads, & KABs became a lot closer & more frequent. Several shells landed within 100m but it was just a nuisance. The only thing that could realistically destroy that bunker is a well lucky KAB or an Iskander. A halfway decent fire team could also clear it out pretty easily but all the Russians in this AO are meat wave conscripts so that wasn't a big concern.

A random TDF soldier almost got himself shot when he ran into our bunker without announcing himself. He was in a resupply run & needed a break. Turned out to be a cool dude. Fought as a conscript in the Soviet-Afghan War, volunteered for service at age 55 when the invasion began in 2022. Still has a USSR passport. Fuckers been living in trenches for 4 years, running his little resupply mission with no plates & a single magazine. Godspeed, Volodomyr.

There was an old cat living outside one of our firing ports. He was covered in scars & missing an eye but the name Uno was taken by another guy that lost an eye so I called him Dos. He was an asshole. One day I saw him & tried talking to him again. That creature found two other dead cats & dragged them to his little lair, he was halfway through eating one of them & has probably finished the second by now. I watched him eat his friend for a good 20 minutes until an arty round landed about 50m away. Fucker didn't even flinch, he just turned & hissed at me. Let no one tell you that warfare is an unnatural human trait.

In this world you are either a warrior or a victim - Dos has chosen to be a warrior. For that, he is alive in a place where men armed to the teeth drop dead daily. I plan to get a tattoo inspired by Dos.

On a lighter note, another cat entered our bunker looking for food. I gave him the rest of my dried pork & let him sleep in my sleeping bag. He got shoved into a dump pouch & is now mine, his name is Toronto. Say привіт.

Our exfil was chill. For me anyway. I use my old USMC issued ruck sack. It's designed to be worn with a plate carrier on. I've also hiked enough to know to put my belt on my pack so that I can use the waist strap. The less experienced guys bought ruck sacks meant for civilian camping or hiking, which don't sit well on a plate carrier. Sucks to suck. Four KABs absolutely obliterated a position we passed about 10 minutes prior, they landed around 300m from our rear group & 450m from me. I don't like being on the receiving end of the airstrike game, it's more fun to watch it hit some sand nigger that doesn't even have the IQ to comprehend a guided bomb. After that our exfil was smooth. I got settled back in this morning & decided to write this while it's fresh in the mind.

The guys are all having a pity party for our wounded comrades, especially S who got his leg amputated. Fuck em, one's a British Para & the other an FFL vet. C will be combat ready within a month. S will get a new leg & be back in the front in about sixth months. Both will tell the story I just told you to anyone who will listen for the rest of their lives. In more polite terms, they're tough warriors & will carry on regardless as always.

My mental state during the CASEVAC was fascinating. It was like a mix of runner's high & flow state. I fell back on my instincts & training. I can happily say that I didn't bitch out & was willing to die to get my brothers out. I can say this about all my teammates as well, very impressive. The Marine Corps instilled a philosophy of "mission first, mission always" that I've come to carry with me in every aspect of my life. I now understand the true purpose of this philosophy, it provides absolute clarity in the fog of war. All that matters is completing the objective, whatever that may be. This makes tactical decision making an easy task.

After it was all said & done, I feel somewhat numb. Not emotionally dull, but that feeling after you finish a morning cigarette or come down from an acid trip. I can almost physically feel my hormones returning to normal. The dreams out there are crazy. All the adrenaline, endorphins, cortisol & whatever else starts flowing give your dreams a very odd feeling. It's almost like a psychedelic experience, but occasionally it's a very vivid & hyper realistic experience.

I've had a recurring nightmare throughout my life. As a kid, I would dream of a monster walking into my room. I would try to scream but no sound would come out. As I grew older this turned into dreams of loved ones being harmed, still being unable to scream. Now, rather than being silenced I simply imagined my rifle not firing. Round not chambered, mag falls out, malfunction, etc. for what feels like hours. Never been a big fan of this nightmare & it never gets better.

The sound of S' screams as the medics worked on him & the sight of his blood covering the hallway have also etched themselves into my senses. I see the hallway whenever I close my eyes & hear the scream whenever it gets quiet. The best I can describe it as is similar to when an image gets burned into an old TV. It's starting to fade, I've just been avoiding sleep & playing music to get my mind off of it. My teammates are schitzed out enough, so I'm not gonna be a pussy & be "haunted by flashbacks" like some hippie.

Drones didn't change anything, by the way. It's the same as any other conflict just with an extra weapon system thrown in. You're either a coward or you're not, new technologies don't change anything about that. They're also not very scary once you get to know them. The vast majority aren't looking for you, they're going somewhere. Even the clear image on fiber optic FPVs or Mavics can't see nearly as well as kill compilations would lead you to believe. If you hear a buzzing, just stay still & get close to a tree. It will probably pass without looking, if it does look it's still hard to see you unless you're moving around in the open. It's the same basic infantry skills that have carried us through for thousands of years, just every new technology increases the skill threshold by punishing mistakes more thoroughly.

I have more thoughts but they're more abstract, I'll save them for the next entry while I flesh them out more. Learning is occurring.

Hail Victory.

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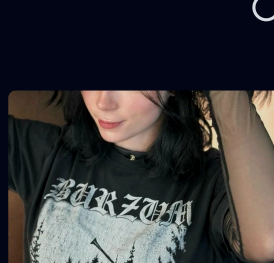

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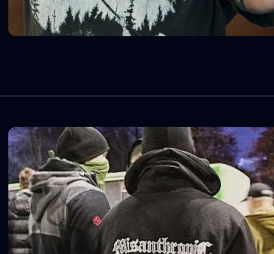

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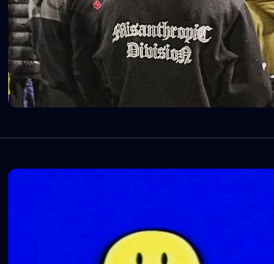

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